

A young woman with dark hair, wearing a dark zip-up hoodie and light-colored pants, stands in front of a school building. She has a black backpack on her back and is looking off to the side. The background shows a brick building with white columns and a tree.

ATTORNEY GENERAL ROY COOPER  
A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

# INTERNET SAFETY

**WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW  
CAN HURT YOUR CHILD**

**Computers and the Internet have revolutionized the way we communicate, work, shop and learn. But along with the positive changes come new responsibilities and potential risks. Hazards that begin with innocent computer use can threaten your family's safety and well-being.**



For example, child predators spend hours every day cruising the Internet in search of vulnerable young people to exploit. In fact, a survey by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children found that one out of every twenty-five young Internet users received an aggressive sexual solicitation online in the preceding year from someone trying to arrange a face-to-face meeting.

As the state's top law enforcement officer and a father of three daughters, I know that it's a challenge to protect children who are smart enough to use a computer, but not wise enough to protect themselves from harmful people and inappropriate material online.

That's why I advise parents and guardians to keep children off of social networking sites and other areas of the Internet that can put them at risk. Young people might disagree with that advice, but their safety should always be our top priority. And if they are allowed to use these sites, they need extra guidance and greater parental scrutiny of their online activities.

Just as you supervise how and when your children drive a car, you can monitor their use of the Internet. This booklet and accompanying video are designed to help parents and guardians learn how to guide their children and find help to reduce online risks.

Your front door may be locked, but if your computer isn't properly secured and used safely, it offers an open window into your home.

**Together we can help our children learn by taking advantage of exciting technology while reducing risks to their safety.**

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Roy Cooper". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Roy Cooper  
Attorney General

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# BACKGROUND

## ONLINE RISKS FOR CHILDREN

1 in 25 youths has received an aggressive sexual solicitation from someone trying to arrange a face-to-face meeting<sup>[1]</sup>

1 in 25 youths has been solicited to take sexually explicit pictures of themselves<sup>[1]</sup>

1 in 3 youths has been exposed to unwanted sexually explicit images online<sup>[1]</sup>

1 in 11 youths has been threatened or harassed online<sup>[1]</sup>

Millions of children under the age of 18 are using the Internet every day, and the number of children who are spending time online will continue to grow. This relatively new communication tool presents a variety of risks for children.

Risks include:

### **SEXUAL SOLICITATIONS**

Child predators who manipulate vulnerable young people into illegal and harmful sexual relationships remain a grave threat to young people who are online.<sup>[1]</sup>

### **UNWANTED EXPOSURE TO SEXUAL MATERIAL**

More young people are reporting that they saw sexual material online that they did not want to see.<sup>[1]</sup>

### **THREATS OR HARASSMENT ONLINE**

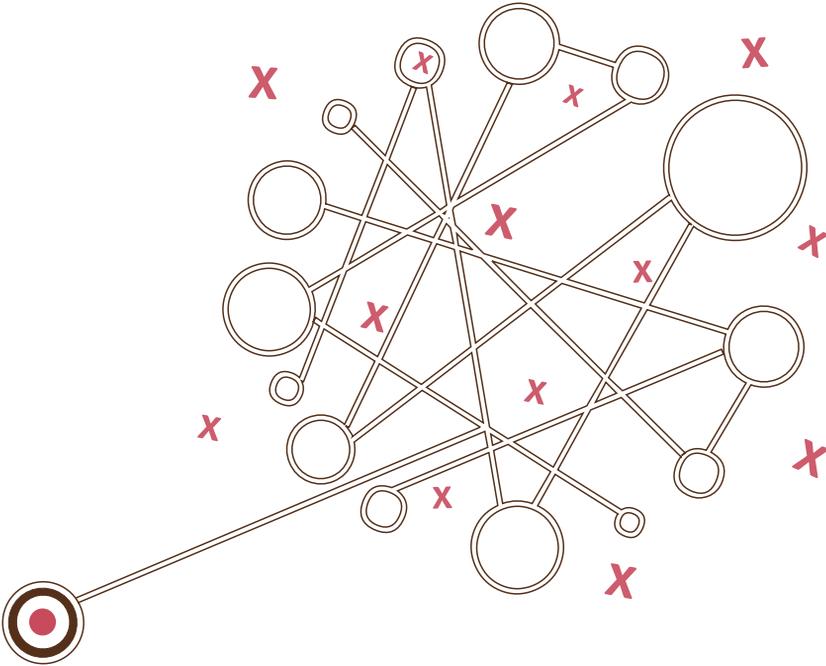
Online harassment increased 50% over a 5 year period. Less than half of those who were threatened or harassed reported the incident to their parents or guardians.<sup>[1]</sup>

Note: this publication uses the term “Child Predator” as a convenient way to refer to an adult who seeks children. However, experts warn that the stereotype of a child predator (for example, a suspicious-looking stranger wearing a trench coat) is inaccurate. In fact, any adult could be someone who would exploit a child. Parents and guardians should also be aware that older children can prey on those who are younger and less experienced.

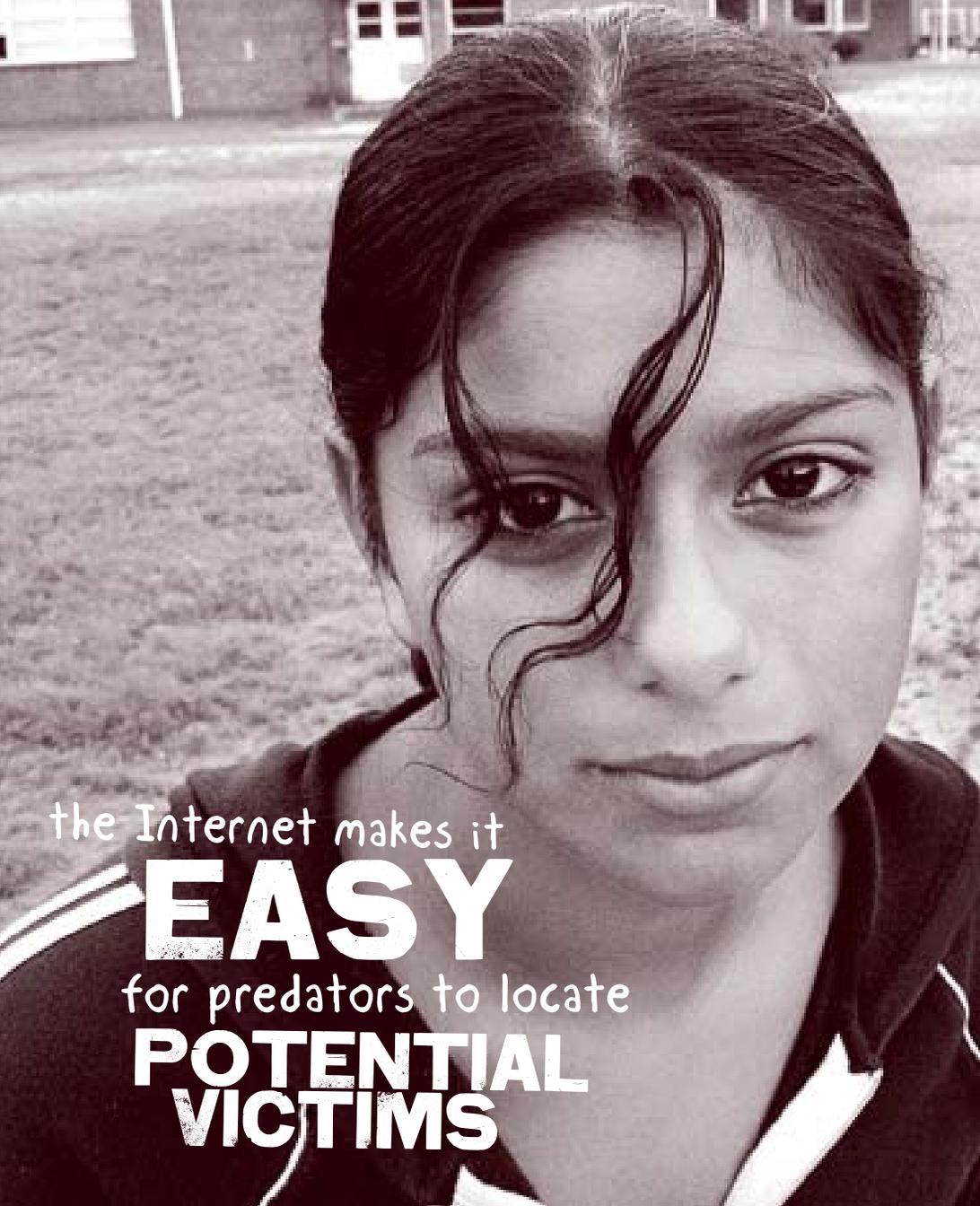
[1] David Finkelhor, Kimberly J. Mitchell, and Janis Wolak. Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later. Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2006. Funding provided by Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, United States Department of Justice.

# SOLICITATION

## BY A CHILD PREDATOR: HOW IT CAN HAPPEN



The Internet makes it easy for predators to locate potential victims and secretly communicate with them. Ultimately they want to manipulate a young person into a face-to-face meeting for sex. That's why it is important for parents and guardians to understand how young people are targeted.



the Internet makes it

**EASY**

for predators to locate

**POTENTIAL  
VICTIMS**

# PINEHURST, NC GIRL FOUND IN LOUISIANA



**United States**  
LEGEND

- National Capital
- State Capital
- City
- National Monument
- National Park
- International Boundary
- State Boundary
- Time Zone
- International Date Line
- Continental Divide

0 100 Miles  
0 100 Kilometers

THE BAHAMAS

A 14-year-old Pinehurst, N.C. girl disappeared from her home. Her parents contacted local police, who sought help from the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (SBI). SBI agents found a number of files on the girl's computer, including email messages. They also discovered that the girl had searched online for bus schedules and maps. Investigators were able to retrieve all of the search information and email files, which indicated that **THE GIRL HAD MET A MAN ON THE INTERNET.** An employee at the bus station recognized the girl's photo and told investigators that she had departed for New Orleans with a man. Using information recovered from the girl's computer, SBI agents were able to pinpoint an address in New Orleans. Agents contacted officials in Louisiana, and the girl was located and returned to her parents. Law enforcement officials in Louisiana placed the man under arrest.

## 8 SOLICITATION BY A CHILD PREDATOR

### CHILD PREDATOR CHARACTERISTICS

While most offenders are male, law enforcement experts say that a child predator can be anyone: male or female, young or old. They often hold respectable jobs and positions in their community. People who want to harm or exploit children tend to relate more easily to children than adults, and they may also seek employment or volunteer at a children's organization. Many will commit offenses over a long period of time, with multiple victims, without being caught.

### CHILD VICTIM CHARACTERISTICS

Law enforcement officials say that ANY young person can be vulnerable to a predator's enticement, including those who may be performing well at school and socializing with a "good" crowd of friends. You may believe that your child can't fall victim to an adult who wants to exploit young people. However, experts stress that such thinking can lead to a false sense of security about your child's safety.

### INTERNET-RELATED VICTIMIZATION

Virtually all Internet sex crimes involve youths who are 12 or older. Girls are more likely to be victimized by adults who use the Internet, but about one quarter of victims are boys. Young people who may be questioning their sexual orientation are particularly vulnerable to victimization that begins online.<sup>[2]</sup> But parents and guardians should keep in mind that any young person can be at risk of victimization.

[2] David Finkelhor, Kimberly J. Mitchell, and Janis Wolak. "Internet-Initiated Sex Crimes Against Minors: Implications for Prevention Based on Findings from a National Study" <sup>88</sup> *Journal of Adolescent Health* 11 (2004).

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**SEX CRIMES**  
involve youths who are  
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# SOLICITATION

## BY A CHILD PREDATOR: WHERE IT BEGINS

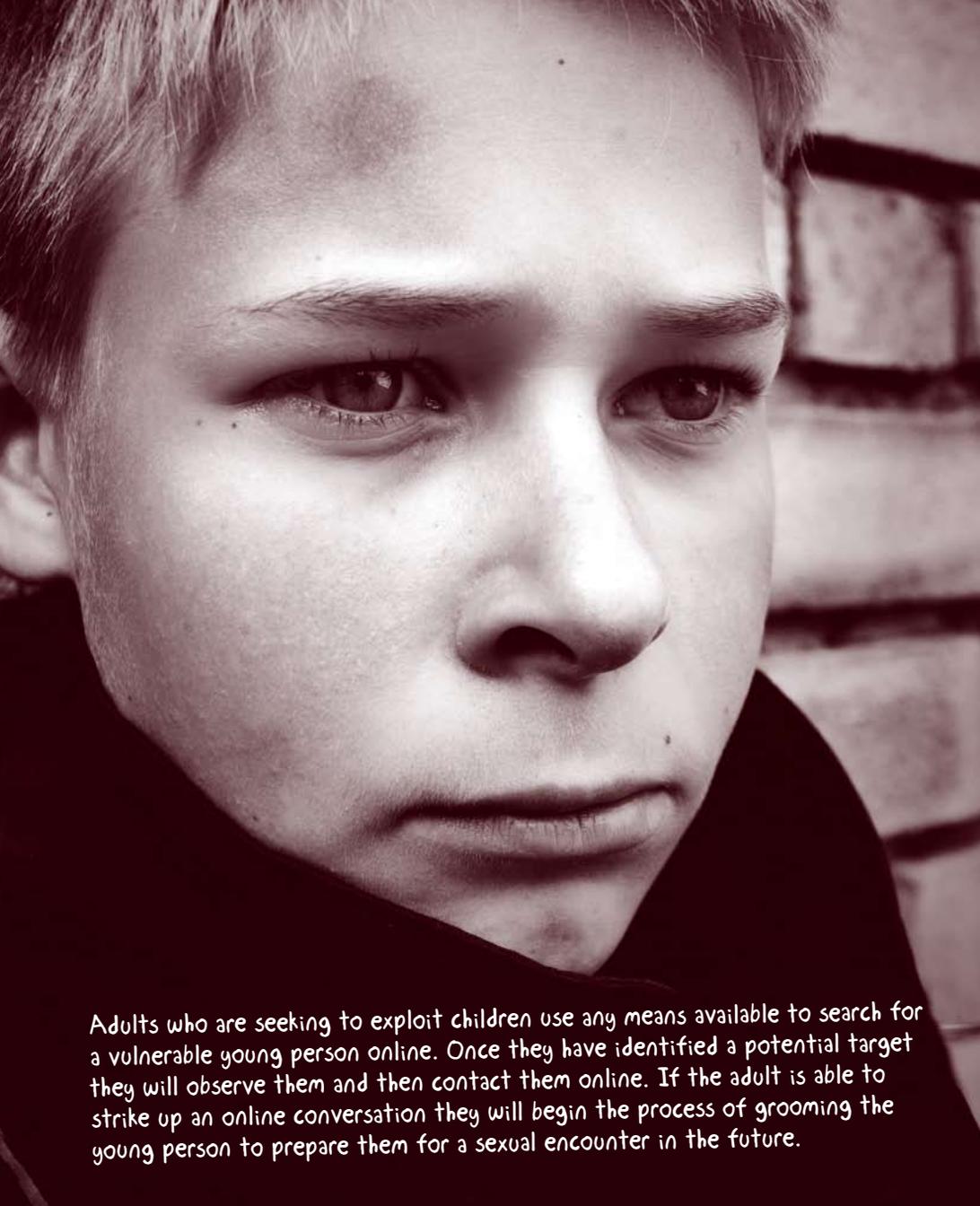
Technology is changing fast, and any part of the Internet that allows people to exchange messages can be used by someone who is seeking to exploit children

In addition to email, which sends electronic messages directly from one computer to another, the Internet offers other ways for people to communicate.

**INSTANT MESSAGING (IM)** and **CHAT ROOMS** allow users to communicate by exchanging messages in real time. IM gives users the ability to chat back-and-forth via typed messages with other users who are online at that time. Chat rooms are like online coffee shops, where multiple users can gather to take part in conversations. Users can also hold private conversations that others in the chat room can't see. **ONLINE VIDEO GAMES** may also incorporate IM or chat rooms. Some game systems allow players to hear each other's voices and speak directly to each other over the Internet. Online video games may also include message boards where topics are posted for others to view and respond to, regardless of whether other users are online.

**BLOGS, VIDEO AND PHOTO-SHARING SITES, AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES** are places where users can post their thoughts, feelings, and experiences online. In most cases communication between users is unrestricted and unmonitored. Visitors to the site can view and post messages of their own in response. After meeting online by exchanging ideas in posted messages, visitors can begin communicating directly with each other.

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BLOGS, SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES, INSTANT MESSAGING, CHAT ROOMS AND ONLINE VIDEO GAMES SEE THE GLOSSARY AT THE END OF THIS BOOKLET.**



Adults who are seeking to exploit children use any means available to search for a vulnerable young person online. Once they have identified a potential target they will observe them and then contact them online. If the adult is able to strike up an online conversation they will begin the process of grooming the young person to prepare them for a sexual encounter in the future.



adults who want to  
**EXPLOIT YOUNG PEOPLE**  
can be extremely patient and convincing

# SOLICITATION

## BY A CHILD PREDATOR: THE GROOMING PROCESS

Teens and preteens feel safe and in control when they are online. But adults who want to exploit young people can be extremely patient and convincing. They know what to say and do to take advantage of the inexperience and vulnerability of their potential victims.

### ESTABLISHING A SECRET RELATIONSHIP

After using the Internet to establish a connection with a young person, the adult will use flattery and other methods to win their confidence. Information from the young person's profile page or one of their blog postings, for example, may indicate hobbies or other personal interests, and the adult can use this information to pretend to have some of the same interests. The adult will often take weeks or even months to slowly gain the young person's trust. As the grooming process continues and the adult cements the relationship, they will also ask the young person to keep the relationship secret.

### USING THE TELEPHONE AND SETTING UP THE MEETING

The predator and the young person will typically engage in phone conversations at some point in the grooming process. They may also engage in phone sex. But the adult's ultimate goal in the grooming process is to arrange for a face-to-face meeting with the young person for a sexual encounter.

### WHY YOUNG PEOPLE MEET WITH ADULTS

Contrary to the notion that young people are tricked or forced into meetings with adults, research has shown that most young people who meet face-to-face with an adult do so willingly.<sup>[3]</sup> They are not deceived into the meeting, and in most cases the adult has not lied about their own age or pretended to be someone other than themselves.

However, in many instances the young person **has** been deceived into believing that the online relationship with the adult is built on mutual affection or romance. These young people may think they are in love, and are often seduced into having sexual relations that are both harmful and illegal.

Other young people may agree to meet with an adult because they crave adventure and want to take risks, want to make their own decisions, or because they are lonely. Some may be curious about sex and want to learn from the “friendly” adult they met online.

If young people seek the comfort and support of someone they've met online while keeping that relationship secret from their families, trouble often follows. Later, if they try to end the relationship, the adult may turn that secrecy against them by threatening to expose previously revealed private information or sexual images to the young person's friends and family. This is how child predators can gain and maintain control over their young victims.

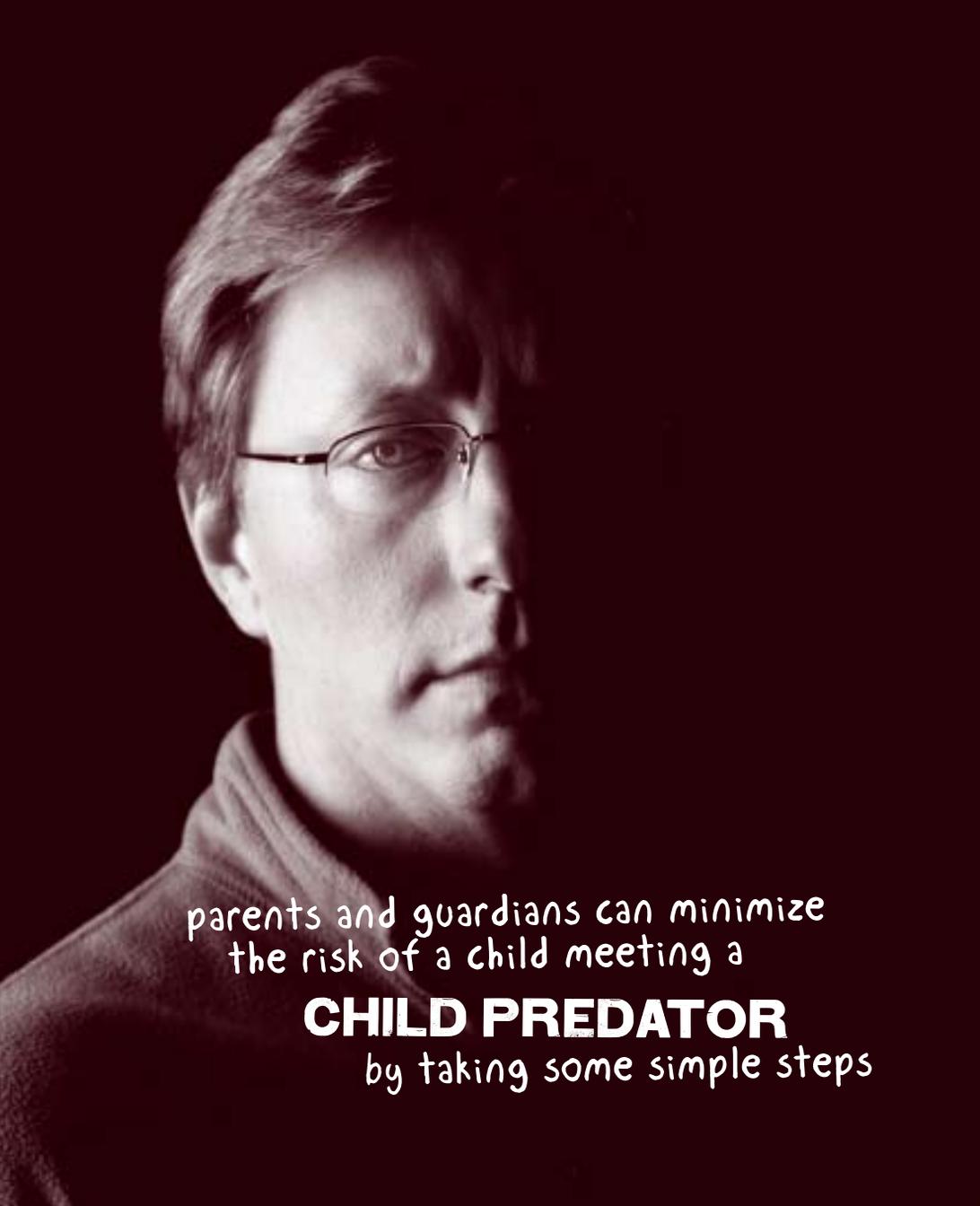
[3] David Finkelhor, Kimberly J. Mitchell, and Janis Wolak. “Internet-Initiated Sex Crimes Against Minors: Implications for Prevention Based on Findings from a National Study” 35 Journal of Adolescent Health 11 (2004).

The adult uses the privacy of the Internet  
and the intimacy of online communication

**TO BUILD AND THEN EXPLOIT**

the young person's trust





parents and guardians can minimize  
the risk of a child meeting a

**CHILD PREDATOR**

by taking some simple steps

# SOLICITATION

## BY A CHILD PREDATOR: TIPS FOR PARENTS

### MINIMIZE RISKS

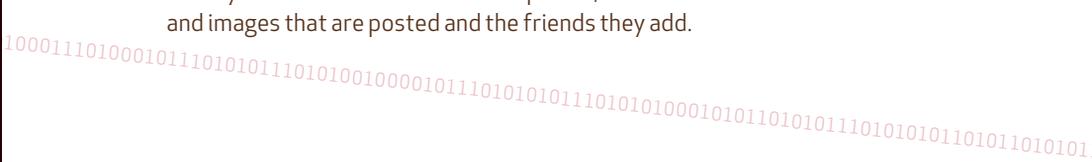
Parents and guardians can minimize the risk of a child meeting an online predator by taking some simple steps.

#### PLACE COMPUTER IN COMMON AREA

You should place your computer in a central room of the house in order to monitor what your child is doing online. The computer screen should face out, into the room, so it is easy for you to see. Develop a list of family rules for using the Internet (see sample Family Rules page 41) and post it next to the computer. Most experts believe that young people should not have Internet access in their room. The age and maturity of the young person should be taken into account in making decisions about their Internet access. Until a young person has shown that they can be trusted to use the Internet safely and responsibly, parents are encouraged to control their access.

### AVOID OR CONTROL ONLINE PROFILES

Many websites offer users the opportunity to set up an online profile where they can provide information about themselves. This is a central element of social networking sites like **MySpace** and **Facebook**. These websites allow users to socialize with each other and when used safely they can be positive outlets for creativity and self-expression. However, information and images from a profile may be accessible by an adult who is looking for a young person to exploit. One way to protect your child is for him or her to avoid online profiles altogether. But if your child does have an online profile, control the information and images that are posted and the friends they add.



### THINK BEFORE YOU POST

In addition to the dangers posed by online predators, comments posted on a blog or a social networking site can come back to haunt the young person who writes them. Words or images that may have been intended for a small audience sometimes find their way to a larger one, especially if they are controversial or offensive. Some parents and guardians have been shocked to see what their children have posted online. Students who have posted threatening words against their school or classmates have attracted the attention of school administrators and even law enforcement. Many university administrators or potential employers also search the Web for information posted by a prospective student or employee.

### MONITOR YOUR CHILD'S ONLINE ACTIVITY

Young people who are allowed to chat or use instant messaging, blogs or social networking sites need extra supervision. To some parents, monitoring a child's online activities may seem like an invasion of privacy. But online communications are not like entries in a diary, which remain private. Instead, they carry information to and from your home and into the World Wide Web. Experts say young people should not have the expectation that their online activities will be considered private by their parents or guardians.

### CONTROL INSTANT MESSAGING

Like email and chat rooms, instant messaging (or IMing) can be used to communicate secretly. Young people often use abbreviations and code (such as POS which means parent over shoulder) to change the course of the conversation when adults are watching and to keep them from understanding online conversations. Your child should only IM and chat with people they know. For more information about chat abbreviations, see the Glossary at the end of this booklet.

## KEEP IT CLEAN

Young people who create a blog, establish a profile page on a social networking site, or engage in similar online activities are opening a window to their lives. Unless they take steps to prevent it by using privacy settings, almost anyone with a computer can come into their world and look around. But if that young person's profile or blog entries suggest an interest in sex or other risky behaviors, adults looking for someone to exploit may believe they have located a good candidate for victimization. That is why it is so important for young people to make a conscious effort not to reveal too much information or post provocative photos.

## AVOID RISKY ONLINE BEHAVIORS

Research has shown that certain behaviors increase a young person's chances of receiving a sexual solicitation. Most of these behaviors are related to interactions with people they don't know. Instant messaging or sending personal information or photos to people they don't know makes a young person more likely to be solicited. Other behaviors include visiting chat rooms and being rude or cruel to people online. Talking about sex online with people they don't know greatly increases the chances of an unwanted sexual solicitation.<sup>[4]</sup>

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has compiled a list of warning signs that can indicate when a child might be at risk online. See page 42.

[4] David Finkelhor, Kimberly J. Mitchell, and Janis Wolak: Online "predators" and their victims: Myths, realities and implications for prevention and treatment.

Because they are always at hand, camera phones make it easy to take photos on the go, but they also make it easy to take

## **INAPPROPRIATE PHOTOS**



# MISUSE OF DIGITAL IMAGES: HOW IT CAN HAPPEN

The computer revolution has been accompanied by a revolution in photography. Digital cameras and cell phones are easy to use and their photos don't need to be processed at the corner drugstore. As a result, people are taking more pictures today than ever before, especially young people. Unfortunately some young people are misusing this technology in ways that can do lasting harm.

Reports of young people taking sexual photos are becoming more common. Some inappropriate photos are taken for a current boyfriend or girlfriend or in an attempt to attract the attention of another young person. In some instances young people have been pressured or tricked into taking inappropriate pictures by another young person or an adult.

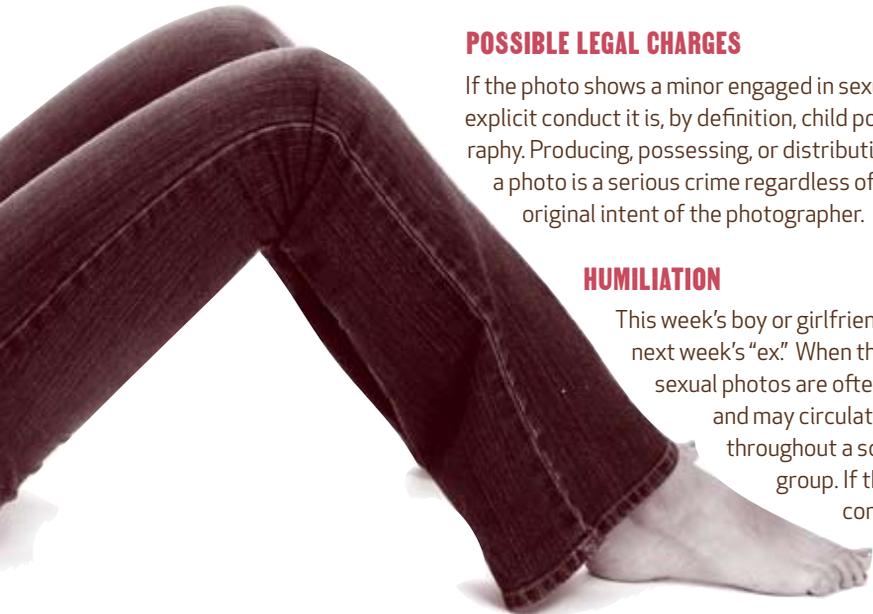
Regardless of the original reason for the photo the results can be the same, including:

## POSSIBLE LEGAL CHARGES

If the photo shows a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct it is, by definition, child pornography. Producing, possessing, or distributing such a photo is a serious crime regardless of the original intent of the photographer.

## HUMILIATION

This week's boy or girlfriend can be next week's "ex." When that happens, sexual photos are often shared and may circulate widely throughout a school or peer group. If the photo comes to the



attention of law enforcement, the young person's parents or guardians may be questioned to determine if they had anything to do with the photograph.

### CONTINUOUS CIRCULATION

Once a photograph has been shared via any electronic media, it is virtually impossible to retrieve. Nude or suggestive photos are routinely posted, traded, and sold. They can be altered and misused, and remain in circulation forever.

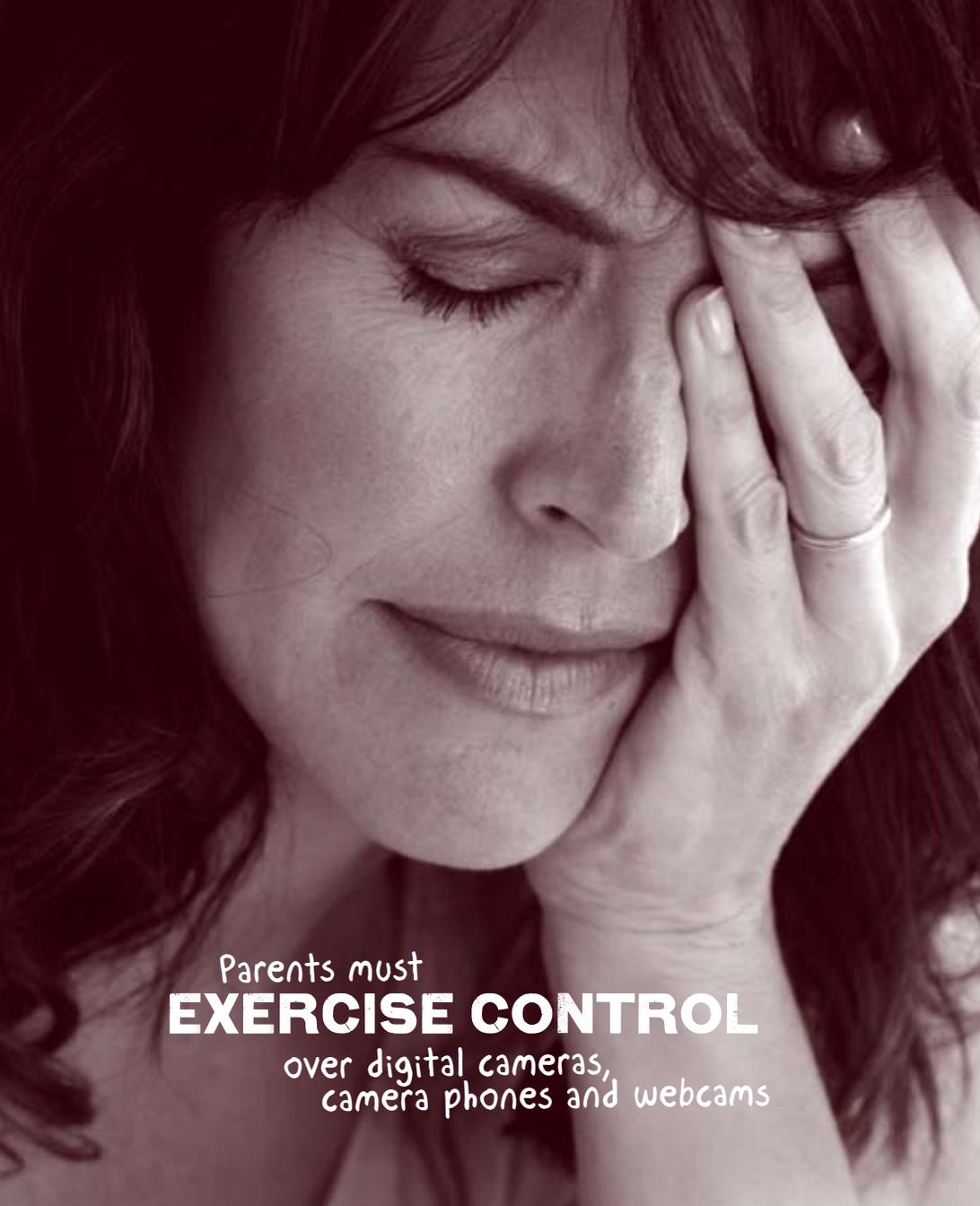
### CAMERA PHONES AND YOUNG PEOPLE: WATCH OUT FOR OVER-EXPOSURE

Cell phones can keep parents and children in touch with each other, and many young people now carry them for safety and socializing. Many of these phones are also camera phones. Some young people are using camera phones to take sexual pictures, which are then transmitted directly to another person's phone or loaded to a computer before being shared. In some cases the subject may not have given permission for the photo to be taken or even know they've been photographed.  
(See also, "SEXTING" in the Glossary of this booklet)

## SOME YOUNG PEOPLE ARE USING CAMERA PHONES TO TAKE SEXUAL PICTURES

Misuse of camera phones isn't the only potential danger associated with hand-held wireless devices. Many of these devices can access the Internet. They are essentially portable computers. They offer the same avenues for contact between adults and young people as desktop and laptop computers, and because of their mobility they are more difficult for parents and guardians to physically monitor.





Parents must  
**EXERCISE CONTROL**  
over digital cameras,  
camera phones and webcams

# MISUSE OF DIGITAL IMAGES: TIPS FOR PARENTS

*Young people often act on impulse and don't recognize the long-term consequences of misusing digital images. Parents and guardians must exercise control over digital cameras, camera phones and webcams.*

When selecting a phone or other wireless device for a young person, parents should pay attention to the extra features that are offered, including features that can help them protect their child. Many phone companies now allow parents to control how their child's wireless device can be used.

Using these tools, parents and guardians can activate Internet filters, block Internet purchases, or turn off access to the Internet. Other tools allow them to block phone calls and text messages from specific numbers or stop text messaging altogether. Parents may be able to monitor how much time their child is spending on the phone and the number of text messages they are sending and receiving. Parents can also stop secret after-hours communication by limiting the times of day that children can use their phones.

## **WEBCAMS AND YOUNG PEOPLE: RISKY AND UNNECESSARY**

*Webcams have legitimate uses, but young people are sometimes tempted to misuse them. Some young people are using webcams to transmit sexual images of themselves.*

*Websites that allow live video chat make it possible for a young person to broadcast their image to one person or many people instantaneously.*

*Many experts say young people should not have easy access to webcams, because the dangers and risks of misuse outweigh the benefits.*

# THREATS OR HARASSMENT: HOW IT CAN HAPPEN

Cell phones and computers also allow gossip, lies, or embarrassing pictures to be distributed to a wide audience, so threats and harassment are no longer limited to the playgrounds or daytime hours. Text messages, chat rooms, email, instant messaging and websites make it possible for a child to be victimized in their home and at any time of the day. Those who express themselves online through blogs, IM, and chat rooms are more likely to experience threats and harassment. Not surprisingly, one in every 11 kids reported being threatened or harassed while using the Internet.<sup>[5]</sup>

## SAVE THE ORIGINAL MESSAGE

Don't delete or erase threatening emails or other communications from your inbox or voicemail. If you are asked to share a threatening email message with law enforcement, forward the original message. A printed copy of the email or an excerpt from it will not be as useful to law enforcement as the original email message that you received.

## IF SOMEONE THREATENS YOUR CHILD WITH VIOLENCE, IMMEDIATELY CONTACT LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS.

Sometimes children are hesitant to report threats or harassment to their parents or guardians. Encourage your child to let you or a trusted adult know if they are being mistreated.

[5] David Finkelhor, Kimberly J. Mitchell, and Janis Wolak. Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later.

# THREATS OR HARASSMENT: TIPS FOR PARENTS

## AS A GENERAL RULE, EXPERTS SAY THE BEST RESPONSE IS NOT TO RESPOND AT ALL.

In many instances the recipient can simply ignore the harassment and it will cease, although this approach may not work in cases of ongoing attacks. If it continues, you may be able to use your email or IM account settings to block further communications from the sender.

If your child is being threatened or harassed online, you may want to contact one or more of the following:

### SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER

Your child's school may have a School Resource Officer (SRO), a sworn law enforcement officer assigned to their school. If so, let the SRO know about the harassment or threats. If your school does not have an SRO, contact local law enforcement.

### INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDER OR WEBSITE ADMINISTRATOR

You can report the harassment or threats to your ISP and the harasser's ISP if you know which ISP the harasser uses. You can ask that the harasser's account be suspended or blocked. If someone is using a social networking site to harass your child, save a screenshot of the Web page and contact the company's website. For more tips on combating online threats and harassment, visit NetSmartz411. See page 48.

# 1-800-THE-LOST

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If your child receives invitations for sexual acts or unsolicited obscene material over the Internet, you can report it by calling

**1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)**  
**OR VISIT [WWW.CYBERTIPLINE.COM](http://WWW.CYBERTIPLINE.COM)**

Sometimes children are  
hesitant to report

**THREATS OR  
HARASSMENT**





While some children seek out sexual material online, a study by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children found that 33 percent of youth had experienced unwanted exposure to sexual pictures on the Internet. In fact, children might accidentally come across a website they weren't looking for, either by misspelling a word, typing the wrong domain name or by using search terms. Even searching the words "toy" or "pet" can bring up sexual material. Unsolicited email (commonly known as spam) can also expose children to sexually oriented material.

**TO KEEP YOUR CHILD FROM ACCESSING OR BEING EXPOSED TO WEBSITES THAT CONTAIN INAPPROPRIATE SEXUAL MATERIAL, IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THE INTERNET WORKS**

Your computer connects to the online world through your Internet Service Provider (ISP). Your ISP may be a company like America Online (AOL), Microsoft Network (MSN), or EarthLink. Many telephone companies and cable television companies are also ISPs. Regardless of which company connects your computer to the Internet, your ISP can play an important role in helping to make your family safer online.

A man in a light-colored suit and tie is sitting at a desk. He is holding a silver flip phone to his ear with his right hand and typing on a laptop with his left hand. On the desk in front of him is a white mug. To the right of the laptop is a vase containing several tulips. The background shows light-colored kitchen cabinets. The overall tone of the image is professional and focused.

use the computer itself to  
help make the Internet a  
**SAFER PLACE**  
for your children

# UNWANTED EXPOSURE TO SEXUAL MATERIAL

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

### CONTACT YOUR ISP FOR HELP

The company that provides your Internet service can help you control what your child can and cannot access on the Internet. However, according to some ISPs, parents and guardians don't always take full advantage of these services. Parents are strongly encouraged to contact their ISP to learn about the parental control features it offers. Increasingly, ISPs are offering controls free or at a small charge. In either case, the company has a technical support staff to help you. If you want to learn more about your company's features or how to set up the parental controls yourself, go to the company's website.

### USE YOUR COMPUTER'S PARENTAL CONTROLS

In addition to the parental controls available through the ISP, you can use the computer itself to help make the Internet a safer place for your children. For instance, you can set up the computer so a child only has access to certain approved websites.

This process may seem daunting, but the computer can assist you in setting up parental controls. Most computers contain some form of a "Help" menu. You should access it and type "Parental Control." The computer will present a list of topic information based on those words. Clicking on a topic will bring more information. One of the first things your computer will do is instruct you to set up individual logins for each family member.

### USE AN AGE-APPROPRIATE SEARCH ENGINE

Once you have set up an individual account for each user, you can set up your computer's parental controls so that your child can only use an age-appropriate search engine. Using an age-appropriate search engine greatly reduces the chances that they will find sexual material while searching online. For more information about age-appropriate search engines, see the Glossary at the end of this guide.

Parents and guardians can also check a record of the websites that have been visited. These are often found under “History.” The websites offer clues about your child’s online activities.

For instance, if your child has a secret email account the Internet History may indicate visits to the site that hosts the email account such as Yahoo or Gmail.

You can set up the computer’s parental controls to prevent the Internet History from being altered or deleted by your child.

**IN ADDITION TO USING AN AGE-APPROPRIATE SEARCH ENGINE, PARENTS AND GUARDIANS CAN ALSO ADJUST THE SEARCH FILTER ON MANY POPULAR SEARCH ENGINES, INCLUDING GOOGLE AND YAHOO, TO FILTER OUT EXPLICIT MATERIAL.**

### **ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE**

**If you aren’t able to set up parental controls on your computer, here are some other options:**

#### **CONTACT TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

Call the computer or software company’s technical support number, or send the company an email. Software means the programs you use to access the Internet like Microsoft Internet Explorer or Firefox.

#### **ARRANGE FOR A HOUSE CALL**

Contact a local computer technical support company that makes house calls. For a fee, a technician can come directly to your home, set up the parental controls for you, and show you how to use them.

#### **CONTACT FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

Many of us have a family member or a friend who is more computer-savvy than we are. If you are having difficulty setting up parental controls, ask that person to assist. They may be willing to help.

A young woman with long, dark, wavy hair is sitting on the ground, looking down at a laptop computer. She is wearing a brown, textured cardigan over a dark top. The background is a field of dry grass and leaves. The overall tone is sepia or brownish.

a computer-savvy family member or friend may be willing to help you set up

## **PARENTAL CONTROLS**

# CONSIDER INSTALLING FILTERING AND BLOCKING SOFTWARE

You may also want to acquire additional parental control software that limits what your child can access. Although many people find that the controls available on their computer and through their ISP are sufficient, filtering and monitoring software can add another level of security. For help in identifying the right software for your family visit NetSmartz411. Learn more about NetSmartz411 at the end of this booklet.

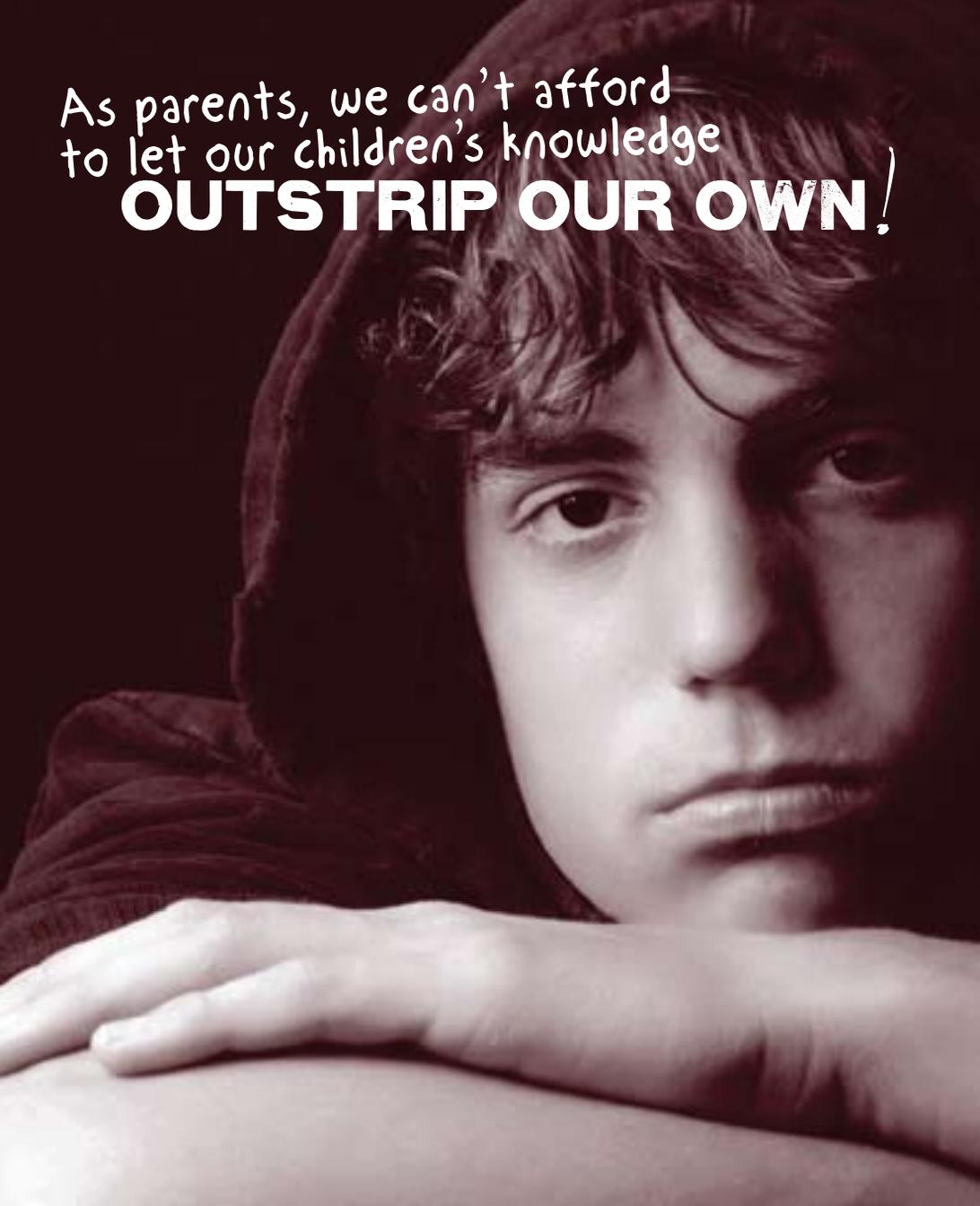
## 1-800-THE-LOST

### REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

MAKE A REPORT TO THE CYBERTIPLINE AT  
1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)

OR VISIT [WWW.CYBERTIPLINE.COM](http://WWW.CYBERTIPLINE.COM) IF

- Your child or anyone in the household has received child pornography
- Your child has received obscene material from someone who knows that your child is underage
- Your child encounters obscene material when mistyping a URL
- Your child is sexually enticed by an adult online



As parents, we can't afford  
to let our children's knowledge

**OUTSTRIP OUR OWN!**

# HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT INTERNET SAFETY

Children need to understand that real world rules and values apply on the Internet as they do in real life

In a calm manner, tell your child what is potentially dangerous about the Internet.

## **THIS MAY INCLUDE:**

- Legal or financial harm to the family if you click without getting permission
- Exposure to harmful material (violent or sexually explicit scenes)
- People online who may not be who they say they are

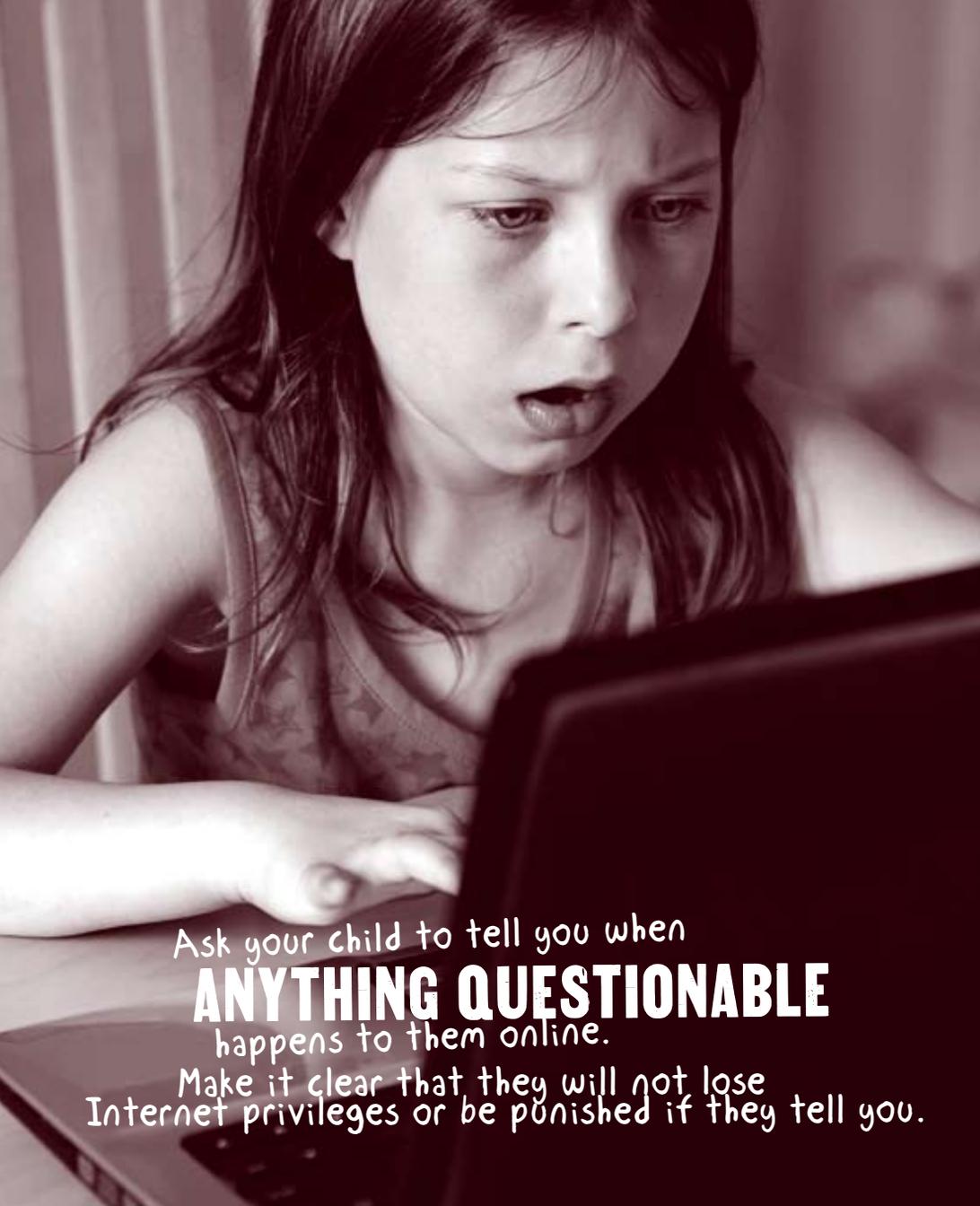
We teach our children to be wary if they are approached by someone they don't know. That advice also holds true online.

Talk about potential risks.

## **ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO TELL YOU WHEN:**

- Someone they don't know attempts to engage them in an online chat
- An inappropriate site comes up on the screen
- Someone harasses or threatens them online

Sources: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and the North Carolina Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force



Ask your child to tell you when

**ANYTHING QUESTIONABLE**

happens to them online.

Make it clear that they will not lose  
Internet privileges or be punished if they tell you.



teens should be  
**VERY CAUTIOUS**  
about how they respond  
to people who contact  
them online

# HOW TO TALK TO YOUR TEEN ABOUT INTERNET SAFETY

## STRIVE FOR OPEN DIALOGUE

Research indicates that teens who are clashing with their parents or guardians are more vulnerable to Internet sex crimes. Parent-child conflicts are normal, but don't let them shut down the lines of communication between you and your child.

## TEST YOUR WINGS... WITHIN LIMITS

Teens are asserting their independence and learning to make their own decisions. It is normal for them to be interested in sex and romance, and to seek adventure. But some teens may need to hear in no uncertain terms that it is illegal and dangerous for a young person to have sex with an adult.

## DON'T BE FOOLED

Those seemingly friendly adults on the Internet are experts at manipulation. They will appeal to the young person's desire to be liked, understood, and appreciated. They will try to exploit the young person's curiosity about sex. When searching for potential victims, they look for teens whose online profile or posts indicate an interest in sex and teens who are willing to talk about sex online.

## MAKE IT CLEAR THAT YOU ARE IN CHARGE

Young people may not realize it, but they need supervision. Remind them that you have more experience dealing with the world.

# CREATING FAMILY RULES FOR INTERNET USE

## SOME OF THE DECISIONS TO CONSIDER IN CREATING FAMILY RULES WOULD INCLUDE:

- Do you want your children to ask you before they access the Internet?
- Do you want to limit the amount of time your children are online? If so, how much time per week or day?
- Do you want to specify when your children may access the Internet? If so, which hours?
- Do you want to permit your children to use email? If so, do you want to share an email account with them or have access to their account?
- Do you want to permit your children to use instant messaging? If so, do you want to approve their buddy list and require them to provide you with an updated copy of that list?
- Do you want to permit your children to enter chat rooms and social networking sites? If so, do you want to limit them to certain ones that you have approved?

When possible, have your family computer rules in place before your children begin using the computer. Children will find it easier to accept and obey rules that have already been established.

# SAMPLE FAMILY RULES FOR INTERNET USE

**USING THE COMPUTER IS A PRIVILEGE. IN ORDER TO ENJOY THIS PRIVILEGE  
AND USE THE COMPUTER, WE AGREE TO FOLLOW THESE RULES:**

- 1) Computer use is not confidential, and we do not hide what we are doing on the computer.
- 2) In our family, we get permission to access the Internet, and we use our personal login.
- 3) We visit websites that are appropriate for our age, and we do not visit websites or access information that are "off limits" for us.
- 4) We don't send photos or give out personal information without permission, and we will tell our parents about any online messages we receive that make us uncomfortable.
- 5) We share an email account with our parents. We will not open or use any other email accounts.
- 6) We do not enter chat rooms or social networking sites.
- 7) We can go online between the hours of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- 8) Time on the computer is limited to: \_\_\_\_\_ hour(s) per day.
- 9) Time on the Internet is limited to: \_\_\_\_\_ hour(s) per day.
- 10) Instant messaging is only allowed with people that we already know and trust in real life. We will provide our parents with a current list of our "buddies."
- 11) We do not respond to messages from people we do not know.
- 12) These rules apply to our home computer and all other computers we use.

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

# FBI WARNING SIGNS

Indications that a child may be at risk online:

★ **TIME SPENT ONLINE**

Your child spends large amounts of time online, especially at night.

★ **PORNOGRAPHY**

You find pornography on your child's computer.

★ **PHONE USE**

Your child receives phone calls from someone you don't know or is making calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers you don't recognize.

★ **UNSOLICITED MAIL AND GIFTS**

Your child receives mail, gifts, or packages from someone you don't know.

★ **CONCEAL COMPUTER CONTENT**

Your child hides what they are doing on the computer.

★ **BEHAVIOR CHANGE**

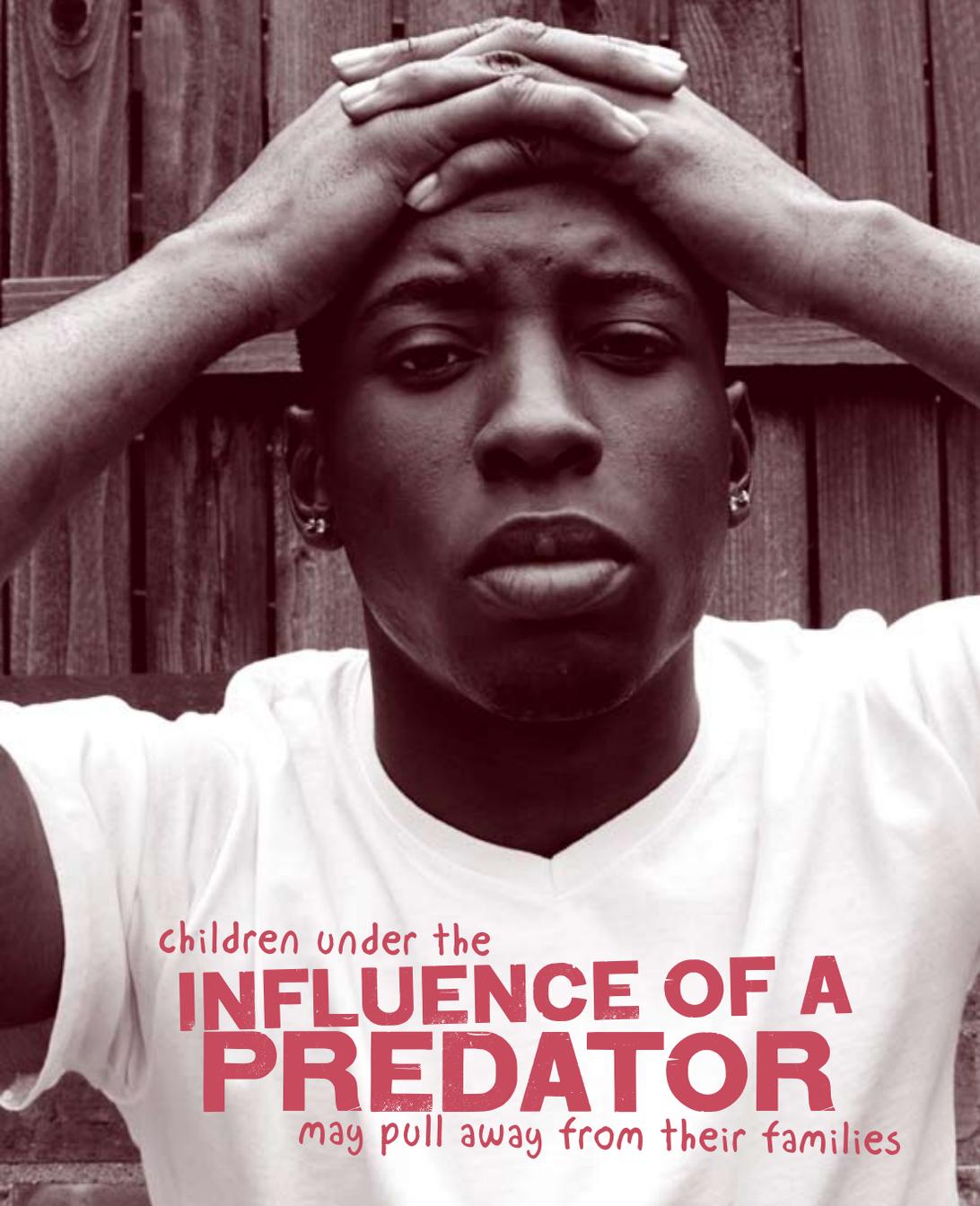
Your child becomes withdrawn from the family.

★ **USING DIFFERENT ONLINE ACCOUNT**

Your child is using another email account or user ID.

**FOR 24 HOUR CHILD ABUSE CRISIS COUNSELING CALL  
1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THESE WARNING SIGNS, VISIT [WWW.NCDOJ.GOV](http://WWW.NCDOJ.GOV)**

A young Black man is shown from the chest up, wearing a white t-shirt. He has a serious, distressed expression on his face, with his hands pressed against his forehead. He is wearing small hoop earrings. The background is a dark, vertically-slatted wooden fence. The overall tone is somber and urgent.

children under the

# **INFLUENCE OF A PREDATOR**

may pull away from their families

# INTERNET SAFETY:

## SOME CLOSING THOUGHTS

Some closing thoughts to keep in mind to help you make the Internet a safer place for your family

### **YOU DON'T HAVE TO BECOME A COMPUTER EXPERT**

Although young people are learning about computers at an early age, parents and guardians can exercise control over their children's use of computers and the Internet without having to become computer experts. As parents, we can't afford to let our children's knowledge outstrip our own. We owe it to them to not only supervise and control their use of this powerful technology but empower them with the knowledge to make safer choices on the Internet.

### **BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY**

For instance, your ISP may announce that it has developed new parental controls. If so, you might have to download or activate them. These upgrades may help you better control what your child can access on the Internet. You should review your existing parental controls periodically. Make sure they are still appropriate and update them.

### **SPEND TIME WITH YOUR KIDS, OFFLINE AND ONLINE**

Remember, the computer is a great communication tool but you are an even better one. The best way to make sure your children aren't getting into trouble on the Internet or anywhere else in their lives is to stay engaged with them. Get them to show you what they do on the computer, and the websites they visit. Ask them about anyone they've met online and familiarize yourself with those people.

### **MONITOR YOUR KIDS WHILE YOU TEACH THEM INTERNET SAFETY**

Unfortunately, there are real risks lurking on the Internet. Some parents say they don't feel comfortable checking up on their child's computer activities. It is understandable that a parent or guardian would want to honor their children's privacy. However, experts say that should not come at the expense of knowing what your child is doing online. It isn't snooping, it's caring.

### **TEACH YOUR KIDS TO SAY NO! - ONLINE AND OFFLINE**

Adults who use the Internet to exploit young people are a real danger. But remember, the majority of sexual offenses are committed by a member of the victim's family or by someone they know. (Sometimes these offenders will use the Internet to secretly communicate with their victim and groom them just as any other child predator would.) Teach children to say NO! when ANYONE, even someone they know, makes them feel uncomfortable or tries to do something they don't want to do.

The Attorney General's Office can provide Internet safety programs for North Carolina's parents. We can also help with your questions about Internet safety. To request a presentation or ask a question, go to

**WWW.NCDOJ.GOV**

and visit the Internet safety section.

# GLOSSARY

**AGE-APPROPRIATE SEARCH ENGINES** greatly reduce the possibility that a young person using the Internet will be exposed to inappropriate material. Examples of age-appropriate search engines include the following. See also page 31.

- **Learn NC** ([learnnc.org/bestweb](http://learnnc.org/bestweb)) - Learn NC's "Best of the Web" collection provides a searchable, annotated catalog of more than 3,000 educational websites.
- **Kidsclick** ([kidsclick.org](http://kidsclick.org)) - Created by librarians to guide young users.
- **Ask for Kids** ([askforkids.com](http://askforkids.com)) - A site focused on learning.

A **BLOG** is basically an online diary. The term blog is a shortened form of web log. A blog might detail the thoughts and daily activities of its creator, or be devoted to commentary about the blogger's interests like their favorite sports team or musician. The creator of a blog posts their thoughts for visitors to read, and visitors can respond with written comments of their own. Visitors can read each other's comments and begin communicating directly with each other. See also pages 10 and 18-19.

In a **CHAT ROOM**, a group of people can chat with each other by typing their thoughts to other users in real time. Their messages are then displayed on the computer screens of everyone in the chat room. Users have the option of going private which hides their conversation from everyone else in the room. See also pages 10 and 18-19.

A **DOMAIN NAME** is the last three letters of a website address. It can indicate whether a website is a safe destination for young people. A domain name that ends in .gov is a government website. Domain names that end in .edu are affiliated with an educational facility. These sites are less likely to contain inappropriate material. While the majority of domain names that end in .com, .org, or .net are suitable for children, many are not.

**INSTANT MESSAGING** (IMing) is a service that lets users know when other users are online and allows them to send messages to each other in real time through a private chat area. Depending on the security settings of your instant message system, any computer user may be able to send an instant message to your children while they are online, including people they don't know. See also pages 10 and 18.

**INSTANT MESSAGE AND CHAT ABBREVIATIONS** are used by young people as shortcuts to save time. They also serve to keep adults in the dark. Examples of abbreviations:

- DIKU** - Do I know you?
- A/S/L** - Age/Sex/Location?
- LMIRL** - Lets meet in real life
- POS** - Parent over shoulder

For more examples, visit [ncdoj.gov](http://ncdoj.gov) and search for "abbreviations."

**ONLINE VIDEO GAMES** offer players the chance to test their skills against others, using the Internet to bring the players together. These games have grown in popularity in recent years. While this form of entertainment provides challenging fun for young and old, it also provides an avenue for adults who are looking for vulnerable young people to exploit. Harassment is also a regular occurrence in online gaming. Like your family's computer, your gaming system should be located where you can see what is going on when you walk by. You may want to consider establishing rules to limit the amount of time your child spends gaming. See also page 10.

**SEXTING** is using a cell phone or other wireless communication device to send sexual text messages or images. In many cases these images are self-produced photographs of the sender. Suggestive text messages and photos are a concern, but in some cases sexting involves explicit sexual images and even video clips. Authorities have noted a disturbing trend toward sexting among young people. Production, possession or distribution of explicit images of minors can lead to serious criminal charges. Parents and guardians who are aware of such explicit images and do not intervene can also be charged. For more information about the risks of inappropriate photography, see also "Misuse of Digital Images", pages 21-24.

MySpace and Facebook are examples of **SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES**. On many of these sites communication is unrestricted and unsupervised. The sites allow users to reveal personal information and interests in member profiles and personal Web pages. An online profile may contain personal information such as a young person's email address, interests, and hobbies. Members can also post photographs. In some cases social networking sites also allow users to IM or chat with each other. Parents and guardians whose children use social networking sites may want to become a member of the site in order to better understand how it works. See also pages 10 and 17-19.

**VIDEO-SHARING SITES** like YouTube and **PHOTO-SHARING SITES** like Flickr allow users to post images for others to see. These sites also allow commentary and messaging among users. Some sites make little or no effort to control the content of material that is posted online or communication between users. See also pages 10 and 19.

**WEB 2.0** refers to the evolution of online entities like blogs and social networking sites that allow users to upload and share information. Young people have been especially active in placing content on the Web, sometimes revealing personal or inappropriate details about themselves in order to gain attention.

**WEBCAMS** are computer-based cameras that can record and transmit video images from one computer to another or to the Internet. Webcams are inexpensive and often no bigger than a golf ball, and they are usually placed on top of a computer monitor. Many computers now have built-in webcams. Webcam transmissions during online chats occur in real time and are not monitored, edited, or controlled. See also pages 21 and 24.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

**THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE** ([ncdoj.gov](http://ncdoj.gov)) offers parents and guardians helpful information about Internet safety and a variety of other useful topics. Visitors can request an Internet safety presentation by the Attorney General's office, watch videos about Internet safety and the dangers of methamphetamine, map convicted sex offenders who live in their communities, and learn how to protect their families from frauds and scams.

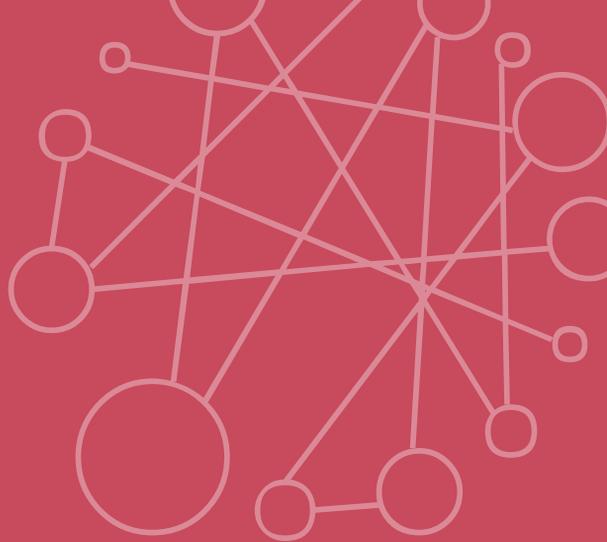
**NETSMARTZ411** ([NetSmartz411.org](http://NetSmartz411.org)) is the technology and Internet safety helpdesk of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. Visitors to NetSmartz411 can browse an extensive library of detailed information for answers to their questions, or submit questions if they can't find what they are looking for. Parents and guardians can also access NetSmartz411's experts by calling **1-888-NETS411**.

**NETSMARTZ WORKSHOP** ([NetSmartz.org](http://NetSmartz.org)) is an interactive, educational safety resource from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children that features age-appropriate activities to help teach children how to be safer online and in the real world. Parents and guardians, educators, and law enforcement can access videos, classroom activities, and presentations.

**ONGUARD ONLINE** ([onguardonline.gov](http://onguardonline.gov)) provides practical tips from the federal government and the technology industry to help you be on guard against Internet fraud, secure your computer, and protect your personal information.

### EN ESPAÑOL

Spanish-speaking parents and guardians can get help with their questions about technology and Internet safety by visiting [www.NetSmartz411.org](http://www.NetSmartz411.org) or by calling **1-888-NETS411**



The information in this Resource Guide represents current best practices as described by experts in the fields of Internet safety and law enforcement. Visit [www.ncdoj.gov](http://www.ncdoj.gov) to keep up with advances in the ongoing effort to keep our children safe on the Internet. You can also learn about scams, identity theft, viruses and other security-related issues involving the use of computers.

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Do you know what your  
child is doing online?



Things are changing fast in the online world. For the very latest Internet safety information, visit [www.ncdoj.gov](http://www.ncdoj.gov)

**NCDOJ.GOV**

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